



Senators participate in NCSL's Back to School Program

When the 4th grade class at Klevin Boston Elementary School in Woodstock was asked to draft a bill, it was a unanimous vote to outlaw all homework assignments. Thanks to a visit from Senator Chip Rogers, these future voters were treated to a first-hand look inside the legislative process and learned how a bill becomes a law.



The National Conference of State Legislatures has developed an annual program designed to target students at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Several of Georgia's Senators have participated in the program, which purpose is to give state legislators an opportunity to meet with their young constituents and share ideas, listen to concerns, answer questions and help students gain a greater understanding of the legislative process necessary for developing effective public policy.

Students have the chance to see what the legislative process is really like from someone inside the state legislature. Not only is this a beneficial part of education for students, but the program also allows lawmakers to learn what is on the mind of their state's youth.

One such legislator who has chosen to speak to students in his district is Sen. Rogers, who said he tries to visit five or six schools a year. He spent the morning with students at Klevin, quizzing them on state government facts, handing out prizes, an-

swering questions and explaining what it's like to be a state legislator: the processes, the pressures and the debate, negotiation and compromise that are the very fabric of American democracy.

After his presentation, Sen. Rogers took a moment to explain the program's importance. "I think it's a great thing if I can get young people interested in public service and being involved. It's important to me to help expand students' knowledge of how laws are made."

Legislators attend 25th Biennial Institute

This December, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia played host to Georgia's state lawmakers, as Senate and House members convened for the 25th Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators.

During the three-day session, legislators are engaged in policy sessions and informative seminars as they learn about some of the most critical issues facing their constituents. The event has been a recognized

feature of the state's political calendar since 1958.

"This is a very historic day, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the Biennial. This is an opportunity to teach new legislators, and it allows long-time veterans to get a taste of all that's going on," noted Lt. Governor-Elect Casey Cagle.

Many legislators said they enjoy participating in

Biennial, as it gives those in the Senate and House an opportunity to meet in a social setting, talk with their peers and learn from their counterparts about the issues facing constituents across the state.



For clips of audio interviews from Biennial, click here:
http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2005_06/senate/biennial.htm



CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPITOL

CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING



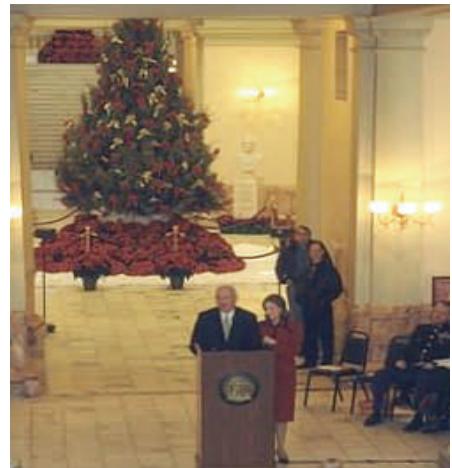
Spirits were high and excitement arose in anticipation for the 2006 Capitol Christmas Tree lighting.

Located in the rotunda of the state Capitol, the Christmas tree stands surrounded by a blanket of snow and encircled by a ring of crimson poinsettias.

Those who



*Scenes from the lighting ceremony.
From top to bottom: the Atlanta Boy Choir, the United States Army Ground Forces Band Brass Quintet and singer/songwriter Crystal McGrath.*



attended the event were treated to musical performances prior to the tree lighting. The United States Army Ground Forces Band Brass Quintet began the event with renditions of classical Christmas songs. The Atlanta Boy Choir was next to entertain the crowd, followed by a performance by singer/songwriter Crystal McGrath. She is a spokesperson for the Toys for Tots Foundation, which was an important part of the event.

Governor Sonny Perdue and First Lady Mary Perdue spoke about the Toys for Tots' long-standing history of help-

ing children, and encouraged everyone to get involved and help support the foundation.

Children, parents, legislators and staff then gathered together as everyone counted down to the exciting moment when the tree came to life as its white lights were illuminated.



Senate staff decorate for a cause

Children's feet will be warm this Christmas, thanks to Senate staffers taking time out of their day to do some decorating. The General Assembly took part in helping Children's Healthcare of Atlanta by displaying a Christmas tree outside of the Secretary of the Senate's office. The tree was not only there for seasonal décor, but also doubles as a Sock Tree and serves as a drop off location for toy donations.

The Sock Tree does not incorporate standard Christmas ornaments, but is covered with brightly colored socks, ranging in sizes, that will be donated to the children at CHOA so that they have something to wear around the hospital during Christmas.

Several Senate staffers recently visited CHOA to turn in all the donations that had been made throughout December at the toy drop off locations in the Capitol. The staff at the hospital was delighted to see the huge donations of gifts and socks for the children.





Employee Spotlight on...Melanie Stockwell

What is your current position with the Senate?

I am Chief of Staff and General Counsel for the President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson, but I really feel that in these positions I serve the entire majority caucus. My responsibilities include giving Senator Johnson advice on rules, developing the legislative package and parliamentary inquiries. During the legislative session I am very involved with whatever big issues arise, such as last year's eminent domain bill. I also have strong relationships and work closely with the policy and legal departments in the Governor's Office and the House.



Describe your professional background and what brought you to the General Assembly.

Before working in the Pro Tem's office, I spent two sessions as an Education Advisor in the Senate Research Office. Prior to that, I was General Counsel at the Georgia Department of Education for seven years. For my undergraduate degree, I went to Carson-Newman College in Tennessee, then later got my law degree from the University of Virginia.

Describe your personal background.

I'm originally from southwestern Virginia, and the accent that you hear is an east Tennessee hillbilly accent. The area where I grew up was right over the Tennessee state line, so we got all of our news out of Knoxville, and everyone had to be University of Tennessee fans. I moved to Georgia when I got married in 1993, and I love living in this state.

How do you spend your time away from work?

I spend my time going between PTA meetings and extracurricular activities with my two children. My son, who is eight, and my daughter, who is five, are both involved in an array of activities, from gymnastics to scouts to swimming. I'm also very involved with church activities, and I often say that my work interferes with all of my volunteer jobs.

What is your favorite thing about working for the Senate?

One of my favorite things is simply working with all the Senators, as they are all so committed to making our state a better place. I've also had the ability to do that myself, which is another reason I love what I do. I feel like with my involvement in the General Assembly I've been able to do my part in making the state better, and that's a huge plus for me.

What is your favorite memory of working at the Senate?

So far, my favorite memory is when I brought my son to Family Day two years ago. He was six years old, and he had the opportunity to go to the Well with Sen. Johnson. It was a great experience for both of us, as I got to share with him what I do everyday. That experience becomes more memorable for him as he gets older and understands better what he participated in, especially as in school he is studying how a bill become a law, and he likes to think of himself as an expert.

Describe something that people don't know about you.

If I had to pick a deep dark secret that no one knows about me, it would have to be that I love to read romance novels. If people knew that, they would probably say that doesn't sound like me at all, but it's true, and I really enjoy reading for fun. When I actually have time to read for fun, I don't want to get too serious!



Monthly Numbers

The revenue collected by the Department of Revenue for the month of November 2006 (FY07) totaled \$1,278,047,000 compared to \$1,208,629,000 for November 2005 (FY06), an increase of \$69,418,000 or 5.7 percent.

The percentage increase year-to-date for FY07 compared to FY06 is 5.6 percent.



Weekends in December

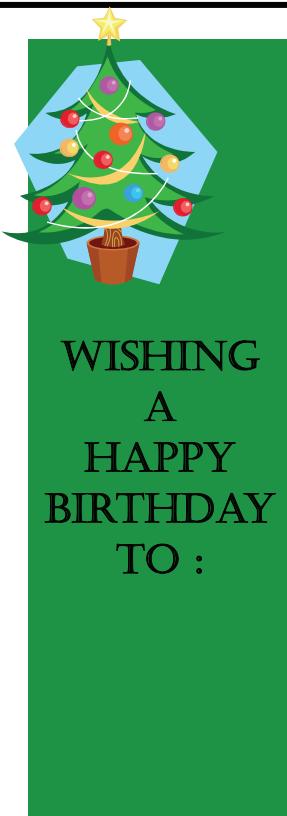
You deserve a break! Explore some of the events happening in Georgia. Here is an update on current events throughout the state.

ATLANTA—Ice Skating at Centennial Olympic Park : through Jan. 7, 2007
<http://www.centennialpark.com/events/ice.html>

CONYERS—Ice Skating at the Conyers Pavilion : through Jan. 21, 2007
<http://www.conyersga.com/>

BUFORD—Nights of Lights : through Dec. 30, 2006
<http://www.lakelanierislands.com/MNOL/default.asp>

STONE MT.—A Stone Mountain Christmas : through Dec. 30, 2006
<http://www.stonemountainpark.com/mini-section/default.aspx?id=42>



DECEMBER 2006	
Majority Leader Tommie Williams	Dec 4 th
Senator Regina Thomas	Dec 5 th
Senator Greg Goggans	Dec 5 th
Senator Bill Stephens	Dec 7 th
Senator Curt Thompson	Dec 15 th
Senator Sam Zamarripa	Dec 17 th
Senator Judson Hill	Dec 17 th
Senator Steve Thompson	Dec 22 nd
Senator Gloria Butler	Dec 25 th
Senator Jeff Mullis	Dec 27 th
Jachque Ratliff , Legislative Assistant	Dec 2 nd
Diana Hauser , Legislative Assistant	Dec 10 th
Kim Crowell , Legislative Assistant	Dec 24 th
Helen Griffin , Legislative Assistant	Dec 25 th
Debra Charnote , Legislative Assistant	Dec 26 th
Donna Yeomans , Legislative Assistant	Dec 30 th
Heather DiNapoli , Senate Budget Office	Dec 10 th
Cheree Harper , Secretary of Senate	Dec 14 th
Judy Hill , Fiscal Office	Dec 24 th
Gordon Rivers , IT Department	Dec 30 th
Eugie Foster , Legislative Counsel	Dec 30 th
Susan Gordon , Legislative Counsel	Dec 31 st